Bear Paw Winter Newsletter 2004

Due to Alaska's extreme climate, there are several things newcomers should be aware of. During the winter months, warm boots, coats, snow pants, gloves and hats are a must. Ski masks or neck gaiters are a good idea as well. Layering clothes will also help keep you warm. Extreme temperatures can reach from 0 (zero) degrees to -60 degrees. Frostbite or hypothermia may occur when you are not properly prepared. Be sure when purchasing winter gear that you get clothing with appropriate temperature ratings that are good to -60 degrees and waterproof, especially for children! School-age children will go outside for recess every day unless it is -20 degrees or colder! Depending on where you are coming from, you may not be able to find these items before you arrive. Some mail order catalogs such as Cabela's and LL Bean do offer this extreme winter gear if you cannot find it locally and of course there are many places once you get here that you can get everything you will need. There are many thrift shops in the area, including our very own Thrift Shop on post, that carry good condition winter gear. You may want to start there!

Vehicles must be winterized! In order for your vehicle to start during winter months, you will need to plug it in. It is recommended that you start plugging your vehicle in when temperatures drop to 20 degrees. Most parking lots on post have outlets. You will need to install, or have installed:

1. Engine block heater, engine oil pan heater and should consider a transmission heater, battery blanket (blanket, band-aid or plate type) which should be the right length to go all the way around your battery OR an under-battery heater.
2. A fifteen- foot extension cord (rated for extreme cold weather). Some people attach a testing light to the end of the cord to ensure the outlet you plug into is working. This is a good idea.
3. Change oil to 5W-30 and ensure antifreeze protection to -60 degrees F.
4. Change oil, gas and air filters. Always carry a spare belt, they snap easily in the cold.
5. Have your vehicle tuned up, grease door jams and place powdered graphite into door locks.
6. Repack non-drive wheel bearings with synthetic grease.
7. Four studded snow tires or a set of chains are helpful, but are not necessary.

The Auto Craft shop and the AAFES Service Station on post offer winterization packages for most vehicles and usually cost between $200 and $300, depending on the type of vehicle that you drive. This may be less expensive in the lower 48, but depending on where you are it may not even be available. If you choose to have your winterization done on post be sure to schedule an appointment as soon as possible, as they book up very quickly and toward fall there could be a one- to two-month wait to get in.

You do not need a 4-wheel drive vehicle in order to get around during Alaska's winter months. If you have a 2-wheel drive vehicle, front wheel drive is preferred. With good tires, studs or chains, you should be able to avoid most problem areas. The highways tend to stay dry during winter months with an occasional ice patch. Intersections in town ice up quickly and accidents [illegible] to ap[illegible] control

MILITARY POLICE

Please remember to watch your speed on post. Housing and School areas are 15 MPH. Don't risk losing your license! When approaching the front gate, remember to dim your lights. During this time of year entering and exiting an intersection can be dangerous. Remember to slow down gradually when coming to a stop. Give yourself ample time when pulling out into oncoming traffic due to tires spinning from no traction on the ice. Do not leave vehicles idling in the Commissary or PX parking lot while you shop. You